

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Alexander Melville Bell, Eliza Symonds Bell, November 1, 1873, with transcript

1873? Sunday Nov. 1st. Dear Papa & Mama,

I had hoped before this to give you a full account of the difficulties with the University — which have all passed off now — but the answer to my note not having been received yet — I have forborn. Prof. Monroe has verbally made things all right — and as soon as I get his promised letter I shall send you a copy of my note with the answer.

I had the honor of opening the School of Oratory.

I send newspaper report.

My Inaugural Lecture on “Speech and the Instrument of Speech” — was so well received that I was invited to re-deliver it before the whole University. This I did last Wednesday in the Wesleyan Hall in Bromfield St. — and had an appreciative audience of about 300 persons.

On the opening of the School of Oratory — seven students enrolled their names.

The next day about 15 put in an appearance. On Monday there were over 20 — and the class may be still further increased.

I made a great effort for my first lecture, and the consequence was — I suffered for it for three or four days.

I am now however as well as ever again.

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I send off with this The “Relation of Tones to Language” — and trust you may get it in time. I am 2 anxious to know what you decide on — in regard to Max Muller's proposition.

I attend the University twice a week — Monday & Wednesday.

Monday — Lecture .

Wednesday — Practical Work.

Phonetical Analysis of words à la “The Principles of Speech”, and Inflections of the Voice.

I have a comfortable — and most pleasant home here.

Mrs. Sanders takes a real interest in me, and I am glad I determined to come. She is acquainted with the elite of Salem and Beverly — and I have already received several invitations to visit friends.

Miss Redden, of whom you have often heard me speak, has just produced a volume of very beautiful poems.

I shall send you a copy. Been to hear Booth — in Iago, and Hamlet. In both parts he was excellent. I was agreeably disappointed — as I expected to hear a ranter. His personation of Hamlet was as near perfection as I can conceive acting to be.

I accompanied Mr. & Mrs. Howe (George's Grandparents) to the Opera on Wednesday. Ilma di Murska and Tamberlik made their appearance in “Lucia de Lamermoor”.

I was disappointed with Tamberlik's singing, as I had read so much about him — But Ilma di Murska was splendid. I remember hearing her at the Monday Popular Concerts some years ago.

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I am very fortunately situated for lectures here, as the Public Hall is just on the other side of the Street from Mrs. Sander's house. I have tickets for the complete course.

Nast — the Caricaturist gave us a most original and interesting lecture last week.

He did not speak much but illustrated his subject by actually creating Caricature before our eyes.

A large square frame about seven feet high, containing enormous sheets of paper, was placed, like a black-board on the platform. He would slash away at this with coloured crayons — as rapidly as if he were whipping an animal — and in little more than a minute would produce a wonderfully perfect life-size caricature of some well-known man.

His power with the crayon was perfectly astonishing.

In addition to the regular amounts received for his lectures, he makes a great deal of money by selling these pictures to private purchasers after the lecture.

On Friday we had a Concert — and I heard the finest Violin-playing I ever heard in my life from Miss(!)Liebe.

I experience such a longing for music that I intend broaching the subject of a piano to Mrs. Sanders shortly — (she has none) — I should like to hire one.

I sometimes however feel as if I had better not — for I am perfectly conscious that all is not quite right 4 yet with my poor head.

Synopsis of Inaugural Lecture on “Speech”. Delivered at the Boston University, Oct. 20th.

I. Speech as it exists in the Air.

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Appearance of the waves of sound.

Mechanical cause of the three properties of a sound

Pitch

Loudness

Timbre

illustrated by actual experiment and by diagrams from Helmholtz.

II. Speech as it exists in the Ear.

Construction of the Ear — illustrated by a large Model of the Ear lent by Dr. Shurtleff.

The Organ of Corti. How the waves of sound are transmitted to the Brain a la Helmholtz.

III. The Instrument of Speech. —

illustrated by Models of the Thorax, Larynx and Mouth &c.

The three properties Force, Pitch & Timbre produced at three different parts of the vocal apparatus. Force — Thorax & Diaphragm. Pitch — Larynx. Timbre — Pharynx, Fauces, Nares and Mouth. Force of Voice increased by the vibrations of the bony framework of the Thorax and by Resonance with the lower tones of the voice.

&c. &c. &c.

My second Lecture given at the University last Monday (Oct. 27th) was upon — 5

I. The Thorax, and the Physiology of Breathing.

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II. And the Larynx, and the Physiology of the Voice — (with diagrams from Max Muller, and Madame Seiler.)

Tomorrow I take up the subject of — The Physiology of Articulation, and Physiological Symbols.

Miss Locke is in Boston and will help me with little pupils.

I intend to insert the following advertisement to-morrow.

Stammering &c. A Graham Bell gives instruction in the Mechanism of Speech to the Parents and Teachers of children with Defective Utterance; and to Articulation Teachers of the Deaf & Dumb.

Boston University, 18 Beacon St.

I hope Charlie is enjoying himself and not flirting too much.

I trust that Carrie and Baby are well — and that all has been arranged satisfactorily about short clothes &c. I find the clothes & Blankets I left in Boston all moth eaten! Please let me know of any Canadian Political News. Kind regards to your lady visitor I forget her name.

With much love Your affectionate Son, Aleck. Prof. A. M. Bell. Brantford, Ont.

1601 Thirty Fifth Street, Washington, D. C. From Letter dated "Nov. 1st".

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Letter gives Synopsis of Inaugural Lecture.

1. Speech as it exists in the air.
2. " " " " " ear.
3. The Instrument of Speech. (see letter)